

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Mile a minute weed

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

In late July, scientists from Appalachian State University published some unfortunate news. The plant *Persicaria perfoliata* was in North Carolina. Known by the common name mile-a-minute weed, this invasive plant from Asia can grow nearly six inches a day.

The scientists found the plant growing in North Carolina's Alleghany County, which borders Virginia. Although it has been seen in isolated locations in the Pacific Northwest, it's suspected that the cooler climate prevents it from becoming naturalized there. However, in the Eastern United States, it was first recorded in Pennsylvania and Maryland and has since spread as far north as Massachusetts, and now as far south as North Carolina. One of the ways the plant has spread is through contaminated nursery stock, and in 2000 two plants were found growing in pots containing hostas inside a Wake County greenhouse.

Mile a minute weed prefers sunny, open areas, especially recently cleared land, making it a threat to agriculture and anyone trying to manage an open area. Its stem has tiny prickles along its stem that are curved backwards, like cat's claws, enabling it to hook onto plants as it grows, eventually overtopping them, making it a threat to forestry as well.

Perhaps the greatest hope for checking the spread of this plant comes from an Asian weevil that impacted the plant's growth and reproduction in studies.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.